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XI'S VISION | GREEN DEVELOPMENT

Nation's green development accelerating

Xi has emphasized the need to maintain 'strategic resolve' in ecological civilization

By MO JINGXI
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More than a decade ago, when President Xi Jinping joined deliberations with national lawmakers and political advisers during China's annual two sessions in 2014, he raised pointed questions about fine particulate matter, or PM2.5, for three consecutive days.

"Compared with Beijing, how is the level of PM2.5 in Shanghai?" Xi asked during a panel discussion with Shanghai deputies to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, on March 5 that year, in a widely reported exchange with the municipality's ecology and environment bureau head.

At the time, images of smog-shrouded skylines in Beijing were making global headlines, turning China's air pollution into an international talking point, and making PM2.5 — airborne particles measuring 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter that can harm the lungs — part of everyday vocabulary.

Today, the term is far less frequently heard. Clearer skies across many Chinese cities have become increasingly common. According to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China's air quality reached its best level on record in 2025, with the average PM2.5 concentration dropping to 28 micrograms per cubic meter.

The change reflects not only tar-

geted pollution-control campaigns, but also a deeper transformation in China's green development philosophy — one that has been repeatedly articulated by Xi at the annual meetings of the NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body.

In 2015, while joining deliberations with NPC deputies from Jiangxi province, Xi said that "protecting the environment is ensuring livelihood", adding that the eco-environment should be safeguarded as if protecting "one's own eyes and life", showing his resolve to curb the widespread pollution that was choking the world's second-largest economy.

In 2016, during discussions with NPC deputies from Heilongjiang province, he called for drawing red lines for environmental protection and leaving sufficient space for sustainable development, in order to leave a beautiful homeland with blue skies, green land and clear waters for future generations.

In 2018, addressing fellow lawmakers from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Xi stressed efforts to strengthen the protection of forests and wetlands, to step up the fight against desertification and pollution, and to build the "Green Great Wall" along the northern border of the motherland.

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NATIONAL VISION, LOCAL ACTION

Guangxi to further bolster China-ASEAN exchanges

By SHI RUIPENG in Nanning and CHEN MEILING in Beijing

The Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in southern China will further boost trade exchanges between the country and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the next five years by expanding logistics channels and formulating more supportive policies, a senior Guangxi official said.

Wei Tao, chairman of Guangxi and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, said the region is "building a first-class channel connecting China and ASEAN", which will feature "the shortest travel time, the best services and the lowest costs through an integrated system of land, sea, air and digital networks".

China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 17 consecutive years, while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner for six years. Guangxi is the only region that links China to ASEAN member states by land and sea, giving it a special position in bridging the two vast markets.

According to local authorities, the Pinglu Canal — the first direct river-to-sea canal project in China — is scheduled to open to traffic during the China-ASEAN Expo in September.

Wei said the canal will become a vital international link between China and ASEAN, featuring "the

shortest distance, lowest cost and greatest convenience", adding that it will "enable ASEAN member states to connect more efficiently and conveniently with China's inland market".

As a flagship project of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, a key logistics network connecting China's western regions to global markets, the Pinglu Canal spans 134.2 kilometers, linking the Pingtang River estuary in Nanning, the regional capital, to the Beibu Gulf in the South China Sea.

Upon completion, the canal will be capable of accommodating 5,000-metric-ton vessels, local authorities said. It will enable goods from southwestern China to reach overseas markets directly through the Qinzhou port, which is part of the Beibu Gulf Port, instead of through Guangdong province. This will shorten the journey by about 560 kilometers and save more than 5.2 billion yuan (\$753 million) in logistics costs annually.

Wei said that Guangxi will continue to build cross-border railways, highways and ports, upgrade Nanning into a regional international aviation and postal hub, better utilize its international communications gateway, and further enhance connectivity with ASEAN member states.

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Wei Tao



Members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference from the Xizang autonomous region view the Tian'anmen Rostrum as their bus passes it after their arrival in Beijing on Tuesday, one day ahead of the opening of its annual session. During the session, national political advisers will hear and deliberate on a report on the work of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, the country's top political advisory body, as well as a report on the handling of the political advisers' proposals. LI ZHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Deeper opening-up promised for steady growth

By LI JING and ZHANG CHENXU

China will deepen high-level opening-up and accelerate the development of free trade zones to stabilize economic growth amid rising global uncertainties, a spokesman for the annual session of the country's top political advisory body said on Tuesday.

At a news conference, Liu Jieyi, spokesman for the fourth session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said that China's economy had shown "remarkable resilience and vitality" over the past year despite a complex external environment.

China's gross domestic product surpassed 140 trillion yuan (\$20.4 trillion) last year, marking a new milestone, with its growth rate remaining one of the highest among major economies, Liu said. He noted that deepening integration of technology and industry had fueled a surge of innovation, with new quality productive forces gaining momentum.

During the just concluded nine-day Spring Festival holiday, the longest on record, domestic tourism spending climbed to 803.4 billion yuan, up 126.4 billion yuan compared with the same period last year, underscoring the vitality of China's



Liu Jieyi (second from right), spokesman for the fourth session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, takes questions from reporters on Tuesday at a news conference in Beijing. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

vast consumer market, Liu added.

While acknowledging certain deep-seated issues and emerging challenges in the economy, he said the country's solid foundation, multifaceted advantages, robust resilience and immense potential remain intact with strong fundamentals.

Against that backdrop, Liu highlighted the Hainan Free Trade Port as a key platform for advancing trade and investment liberalization.

The Hainan FTP island-wide special customs operations launched late last year represent a landmark

step in expanding high-standard opening-up and promoting an open world economy, he said.

The special customs operations have significantly enhanced trade facilitation and strengthened links with international markets, said Liu. During the Spring Festival holiday, offshore duty-free sales in Hainan province rose 30.8 percent year-on-year, while the number of visa-free foreign arrivals represented a year-on-year increase of 75.6 percent, reflecting smoother cross-border flows of goods and people, he added.

Liu described these developments as part of the country's broader push for institutional opening-up, covering rules, regulations, management and standards.

"China has always adhered to opening-up as a fundamental national policy. The door will not close; it will only open wider," he said.

Liu said that over the past year, the CPPCC has conducted research on building a higher-standard open economic system, improving services for outbound investment and advancing projects such as the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, with the aim of improving the quality and efficiency of foreign trade and facilitating the "dual circulation" strategy.

China will remain committed to expanding high-level opening-up, promoting trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and injecting greater certainty and positive energy into global development, Liu said, adding that the country stands ready to share development opportunities and work with other nations for a better future.

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A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Beijing's ancient alleyways offer a serene, historical escape from fast-paced urban life

By CHEN NAN
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In the early morning light, Zhuanta Hutong comes to life. Narrow alleys glow with soft sunlight, casting long shadows across brick walls. The scent of street food mingles with the hum of daily life, as old bicycle carts rattle past small courtyards and laundry sways in the breeze.

Yue Haizhou, who has worked in the neighborhood's management department for more than two decades, enjoys walking through the lanes and witnessing their vibrant pulse, as she has done for years.

But for Yue, a Beijing native who

grew up in the hutong, this is more than just a neighborhood. "It is a journey through Beijing's soul," she said. "Every step feels like a conversation with the city's heart."

Tucked beneath Beijing's towering modern skyscrapers, Zhuanta Hutong stands as one of the oldest and most historically significant lanes in the capital city. This narrow alley is the only one in Beijing to have a documented history spanning three dynasties: Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911). In fact, it is often referred to as "the root of the hutong", serving as a living testament to Beijing's deep history.

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FM urges ceasefire in call with Israeli counterpart

By ZHAO JIA
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Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone call on Tuesday with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and voiced opposition to the military strikes launched by Israel and the United States against Iran, saying that the use of force cannot truly resolve the issue but will create new problems and grave repercussions.

The true value of military strength lies not on the battlefield but in preventing war, Wang said, calling for an immediate halt to hostilities to prevent the conflict from spiraling further out of control.

He expressed regret that recent talks between Iran and the US have been disrupted by military strikes.

All parties, he stressed, should abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter

and refrain from the use or threat of force in international relations — an approach that serves the fundamental interests of all sides, including Israel.

Noting that China has consistently upheld an impartial position on Middle East issues, Wang expressed the country's willingness to keep playing a constructive role in promoting de-escalation.

He also demanded that Israel take effective measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and institutions. In response, Sa'ar said Israel attaches great importance to the matter and will safeguard the security of Chinese personnel and organizations.

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